

## Report All Changes that Affect Your Eligibility

Food Stamps recipients must notify their local DSS office about changes in their income or other circumstances. Such changes may affect their eligibility for benefits. Most households are required to report changes on their monthly report form which must be returned to their local office between the 15th and 20th of each month. Households that do not report monthly are required to report changes within 10 days of when they occur. These changes include:

- the addition or loss of a household member
- a change in residence and the resulting change of shelter costs
- any new source of income, if any income stops, or any increase or decrease in total household earned income of more than \$100 a month, or unearned income of more than \$50 a month
- when cash on hand, stocks, bonds, money in a bank account or savings reaches a total of \$2,000
- when anyone in the household gets a car or other licensed vehicle

## You Have Certain Rights

Anyone may apply for food stamp benefits. Applicants and recipients have the right to file an application on the same day they contact the local DSS office. They may request help completing an application and have the right to be interviewed in private with household circumstances kept confidential.

Those applicants who qualify as having an immediate need have the right to get food stamp benefits within a few days of their application. Applicants and recipients have the right to receive notice of any change in their benefits or certification period.

Applicants may request a fair hearing if they feel the department has made a mistake in their case. They are entitled to be notified of the decision of the hearing and that they have the right to appeal it.

## Welfare Fraud is a Crime

It is illegal to knowingly use, transfer, acquire, change or possess food stamps or Dakota EBT cards in any way that is not authorized by the Food Stamp program. If the value is \$100 or more you could be charged with a felony. If found guilty, you could be fined up to \$250,000, be sentenced to 20 years in jail, or both.

Persons found guilty of intentional program violations may be disqualified from the Food Stamp program 12 months for the first offense, 24 months for the second, and permanently for the third offense. Also, the court will require repayment of any unauthorized food stamp benefit issued.

Food stamp benefits cannot be used to buy nonfood items such as alcohol, tobacco, household supplies, medicines, ready-to-eat food or pet food.

For more information about food stamp benefits contact the Department of Social Services Food Stamp Office at 700 Governors Drive, Pierre, SD 57501-2291 or call your local DSS office.

### DSS Nondiscrimination Policy:

Department of Social Services (DSS) staff, programs and policies must not discriminate against clients or applicants for services because of race, color, sex, age, disability, religion and national origin. To file a complaint of discrimination write: DSS Division of Legal Services, 700 Governors Drive, Pierre, SD 57501-2291 or call: (605) 773-3305. If you have a question regarding program services, please contact your nearest DSS office or (605) 773-3493. (We do accept collect calls at this number.)

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# Food Stamps



Department of Social Services  
**Food Stamp Program**

## Food Stamp Benefits

The Department of Social Services (DSS) Food Stamp program helps low-income South Dakotans buy the food they need to stay healthy while they work to regain financial independence. Food stamp benefits are provided to supplement the household's food budget. The amount of food stamp benefits a household receives is based on the size and income of that household. The program operates under the requirements of the Department of Agriculture.



### Applying for Food Stamps

To receive food stamp benefits, the head of your household should apply at your local DSS office. If this is not possible, an authorized representative may apply for you or you may apply by mail. The applicant is responsible for any over-issuance resulting from false information. Household circumstances discussed during the interview are confidential.

If no family member can come to the office or send a representative, a telephone interview or home visit may be arranged. This option is available to applicants who are over age 65, those who are disabled, or those with a hardship that prevents them from coming to the office.

Applicants must provide proof of identity, residency, income, and rent or mortgage payments. Social Security numbers must also be provided.

Applicants for both SSI and Food Stamps may apply for both programs in a single interview at local Social Security offices if all persons in the household have needs covered by SSI.

Certified applicants may receive food stamp benefits within 30 days of their application. Some adults without dependents can only receive food stamps for three months out of a 36-month period unless they are employed or performing work in exchange for assistance.

### Eligibility is Based On Income, Age & Disability

Eligibility for food stamp benefits is usually based on gross and net income or, for families with at least one elderly or disabled member, just net income.

The amount of benefits received is determined by household size and adjusted gross income after these exemptions: a standard deduction; a 20 percent earned income deduction; a deduction for dependent care (up to \$175 for children age two and over and up to \$200 for those under two years old); and a limited deduction for excess shelter care expenses. Gross income limits are established by the federal government and adjusted annually. Current gross income limits are available from local food stamp caseworkers.

A family may have liquid resources (cash or assets easily converted to cash) of up to \$2,000. With one or more family members who are disabled or age 60 or over, the resource limit is \$3,000. One family car per household is excluded. Other vehicle values may be added as an asset.

## Able-bodied Applicants Must Seek Employment

Able-bodied applicants must register for work and cooperate in seeking and keeping employment. In certain counties, applicants are required to participate in an Employment and Training Program (E & T). However, you may be exempt from this requirement if you are:

- responsible for care in the home of a disabled person or child under age six
- pregnant (in fourth month or later)
- a household member participating in the TANF work program
- a VISTA volunteer
- employed or self employed, and meeting certain requirements
- a student enrolled at least half-time in any recognized school or higher learning

### Food Stamp Benefits Card

Food stamp recipients receive their benefits in an electronic account rather than paper coupons.

Recipients are given a plastic debit card, similar to a credit card, that allows them to use their electronic benefits to purchase food items at authorized stores. Food Stamp Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) is much faster and easier than using paper coupons and eliminates loss or theft of food stamps.

